

LITERARY NOTES.

The latest competition for the prizes offered for a series of stories by the publishers of the *Youth's Companion*, Boston, drew out, it is stated, no less than five thousand contributions, and the award of the highest, the sum of \$1500, for a story in eight chapters, has drawn attention to the author, Mr. Homer Greene, a Pennsylvania lawyer and *litterateur*, residing at Honesdale. Mr. Greene's story is entitled "The Blind Brother," and the scene is laid among the coal mines of the Wyoming Valley. The characters are finely drawn, and there are not only plot, incident, and movement, — all important in a story for young people, — but a fine drawing of the individual actors, and both pathos and humor in the narrative. The knowledge of the coal mines utilized in the story was gained by experience of two or three years, between 1869 and 1872, with a civil and mining engineering corps, at work in and about Pittston, and the fidelity of the descriptions of localities and types of character is attested by all who are acquainted with the region.

Mr. Greene is a Pennsylvanian, his native place being Ariel, in Wayne county, where he was born in January, 1854. He graduated at Union College in 1876, and at the Albany Law School in 1877, since which time he has resided in Honesdale, and has served a term as District Attorney of his county. His first literary work was a short story, "The Mad Skater," published in Mayne Reid's magazine *Onward*, in 1869. His contributions to college literature were "numerous, but not noteworthy." Several of his poems have been, as favorites of the popular fancy, sure to be, widely reprinted, and credited to other authorship than the real one. Among them was "What My Lover Said," published in the New York *Evening Post*, in 1875, and as it was signed with the author's initials, H. G.—attributed by some ingenious and fanciful person to Horace Greeley, with the consequence that Mr. Greene had some difficulty in reclaiming it at last. Other favorites were "My Daughter Louise," published in *Our Continent*; "The Rivals," which appeared in *The Critic*, of New York, in 1885; and a little poem, in the *Christian Union*, as early as 1873, "She Kissed the Dead." In prose, Mr. Greene's sketch, in 1883, in *Lippincott's Magazine*, "The Professional Juror," was his most important work until he produced a prize Christmas story, "Dick the Door Boy," for the *Scranton Truth*, in 1884; last year he wrote another for that journal, "The Van Slyck Dog Case." "The Blind Brother" must be regarded, apart from seal of approval implied in its receiving so substantial an award, as a very notable piece of literary construction.—*The American*.

Astronomical Notes.

The three planets Jupiter, Venus and Saturn will be superb objects during the entire month of April. We give Jupiter the first place, as his opposition with the sun occurs on April 21, this being his culminating point as seen from the earth. He then looms up in the east at sunset, looks down from the meridian at midnight, and sets at sunrise.

European astronomers have already seen this princely planet in full daylight with the naked eye. An observer at Argentan, France, followed the course of the planet from 7 o'clock till 10 o'clock on the morning of December 20, 1886, and on several succeeding mornings, and again on January 15 and 16, selecting the time when Jupiter was in or near conjunction with the moon, in order to know his exact position in the sky. The giant of the system in the full sunlight looked like a tiny shining point.

Observers with unusual visual power may now see the largest of the satellites with the unaided eye, and the whole four are visible in a marine glass.

Venus, in the western sky, worthily rivals her brother planet in the eastern sky. No planetary aspect is more charming than the one presented when the two most beautiful planets revealed to human view are found, the one rising with stately step in the east, while the other descends, serenely radiant, in the west. Venus is seen on the glowing twilight sky for more than two hours after sunset, and Jupiter, after opposition till she is lost to view, and then he reigns supreme among the stars till the morning dawns.

Saturn is the third member of the trio, but his brightness is on the wane, and before April closes he disappears from view before midnight. On April 1 he was on the meridian, about half past 6 o'clock in the evening. He is still an interesting object as he descends in the west and approaches Venus, the two planets being near together on the evening of May 30. Saturn may be easily traced by his companions, Castor and Pollux on the north and Procyon on the south.

Scientific American.

The Dyak as a Climber.

The Hill Dyaks of Borneo are expert climbers. Mr. Hornaby, while collecting specimens of natural history, saw a Dyak ascend a large tapang tree, five feet in diameter at the base, straight as a ship's mast, and without the smallest limb or knot for 120 feet up.

The man went up the tree to secure a bees' nest hanging from the under side of the lowest limb. The nest was simply a large, naked, triangular piece of white comb.

A Dyak "ladder" had been put up the previous day, and reached from the ground to the branches. It consisted of seven twenty foot bamboo poles held almost end to end alongside the trunk by sharp pegs driven into the soft wood about two feet apart.

The pegs were driven first on one side of the poles and then on the other, and to them the bamboos were lashed by rattans, which held them firmly about eight inches from the tree. These pegs served as the rungs of the ladder.

The builder must have been a bold man, with nerves of steel. He was obliged to let go of the poles over a few feet in order to build the ladder perfectly to himself.

The completion of the ladder was most difficult. Climbing to the slight bamboo pole, 100 feet from the ground, he hauled up the last bamboo, twenty feet long, drove in the peg, lashed the lower end of the pole to it, and then ascended that climbing bamboo to fasten it at the top.

The Dyak honey hunter fastened to his back a basket to receive the honey. Making up his torchwood, with which to smoke the bees out of the nest and away from himself, he ignited it, slung it by a cord from his neck, so that it would hang below his feet, and started up the slender "ladder."

Hand and foot he went up, peg after peg, with indomitable grace, which would bring him credit to the most daring of sailors. Even that sailor would have been pardoned if he was a little shaky, while climbing a tall factory chimney by the lightning rod.

On reaching the lower limb, 123 feet from the ground, he took his torch in one hand, waved it to and fro, until it smoked freely, and then crawled out along the bare branch until he was in reach of the coveted nest.

Examining it first on one side, and then on the other, he shouted down as cheerfully as if his climb had been nothing.

"No honey!"

Leaving the comb untouched, he descended with a smile, and reached the ground without the least tremor.—*Youth's Companion.*

The Lick Telescope.

What the Lick telescope will do will depend on men who have the handling of it. It will not make discoveries of itself.

All that can be said of it is that it will place in the hands of painstaking competent observers the best means now in existence of scanning the heavens.

If they do not turn the means to account it will not be the fault of the telescope.

In times past some small telescopes have made more important discoveries than stand to the credit of some of the large telescopes of our day. But this is not because the small instruments were better, but because in proportion to the progress of exploration they have placed the heavens naturally diminishes.

There is less to be discovered now than there was in the time of the elder Herschel.

Nor is it logical to deride large telescopes because Lord Rosse's great instrument has added little to its early nebular discovery.

His telescope is powerful, but it is not exact or accurate, and every observer knows that exactness and precision in a telescope are even more important than power.

Professor Davidson says that the Lick telescope will unveil stars of one degree fainter magnitude than can be detected by the eye.

It would be no small gain.

A correspondingly increased power ought to add to our knowledge of Mars, which is the planet of most immediate interest to observers on this globe.—*San Francisco Call.*

Flinney's Valuable Find.

Louis Blinding says the generally accepted statement that the largest nugget ever found in California was worth little more than \$21,000 is an erroneous one.

He says that J. J. Flinney, "Old Virginia," found a piece of gold about six miles from Downieville, Sierra county, on Aug. 21, 1866, that weighed 5,000 ounces.

The gold of that vicinity was

worth \$18 per ounce, which would make the value of the nugget \$90,000.

This would make the Flinney nugget the largest piece of pure gold ever discovered, so far as accounts go.

Heretofore the Australian nugget, found in the Ballarat gold fields, has been considered the largest.

It was valued at \$60,000.

Flinney, as he was familiarly called in those days, was sent to the World's Fair, the greatest silver discovery was made there, and from the town of

Virginia City took its name.

The man who discovered the largest nugget in California and gave his name to the richest mining camp in the world died in extreme poverty.—*Grass Valley Union.*

A Discreet Daughter of the Family.

One of Detroit's best known evangelical ministers has a half interest in a 4-year-old daughter. The other day she broke over the traces of discipline and her injurious to tell God all about what a naughty little girl she had been.

At the expiration of her penance hour she came forth very quietly, as if her discipline had had a wholesome effect.

"Well, little daughter," said the mother, "did you tell God all about it?"

"No, mamma," was the reply: "I did not do it, 'cause I thought my papa wouldn't like to let it out of the family."—*Detroit Free Press.*

Navigation of the Air.

Among the securities to be dealt in for the Consolidated Stock Exchange of New York are those of the National Aerial Navigation company. A corporation is to be formed, with a capital of \$100,000,000, whose aim is to test the various inventions designed to give man as complete control of the air as he now has of the water and the earth, in carrying him from point to point on the surface of the globe. One good may result from the war in Europe. It is known that there is a French bureau which has made successful experiments in air navigation. Captive balloons proved useful in the last European war. Observations from them gave some idea of the movements of the enemy's various corps d'armée. A navigable balloon or aerostat, under some sort of control, would be of the utmost value, as, moving from point to point, it could indicate the position of the enemy, revealing what the enemy's strength were. It is known that a Capt. Ranard enthusiasts have been able to navigate the air when there was not much wind blowing. But the full results of the experiments have been well kept military secret. Undoubtedly war in Europe would develop what has been done in aerial navigation.

But why wait for war.—*Democrat's Monthly.*

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